

This Legislation Is Likely to be One of the First Bills Signed into Law by President Obama Washington, D.C. – Rep. Charlie Wilson (OH-6) today joined a majority in the House of Representatives in support of bipartisan legislation to provide health care to 11 million children in modest-income families. The Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) Reauthorization Act was approved by a vote of 289-139. The bill is very similar to the legislation that President Bush vetoed twice in the 110th Congress.

"With both Ohio's and our nation's unemployment over 7 percent, and with job losses expected to rise, it is more important than ever for American families to have access to affordable quality healthcare," Wilson said in a speech he delivered on the floor of the U.S. House this morning.

The State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) was created in 1997 to provide health care coverage for children in families that earn too little to afford health insurance for their children themselves but too much to qualify for Medicaid. This bill will give states the resources and incentives necessary to reach and cover millions of uninsured children who are currently eligible for, but not enrolled in, SCHIP and Medicaid.

"Reauthorizing SCHIP will serve as the first step toward providing hardworking Americans with the help they need to take care of their families during this difficult economic time," Wilson said.

The bipartisan bill has been endorsed by dozens of organizations, representing millions of Americans – ranging from business groups such as the National Federation of Independent Businesses and Business Roundtable to the American Hospital Association to such groups as AARP and Families USA.

This bill reauthorizes SCHIP through FY 2013 and preserves the coverage for all 7.1 million children currently covered by SCHIP, including preserving the coverage of 231,538 children in Ohio.

The bill also extends health care coverage to 4.1 million additional low-income children, who are currently uninsured.

The bill is fully paid for – raising the tobacco tax by 61 cents. Raising the tobacco tax also promotes children's health – by discouraging children from smoking. According to the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, a 61-cent increase in the tobacco tax means that 1,873,000 fewer children will take up smoking.

"Providing healthcare to children is the right thing to do for clear reasons," Wilson said. "First, a healthy child is better prepared for learning and success. Second, it makes more sense to pay for less expensive preventive care than to wait for children to get sick and then have to cover expensive emergency room visits."

This critical bill could be one of the first bills signed into law by President Obama. Democrats have fought for this legislation for three years. "Coverage for millions of children, that is paid for, is exactly the kind of change Americans voted for when they voted in November," Wilson said.